

Committee on Resources

Full Committee

Testimony

Land and Water Conservation Fund Testimony
Before the House Resources Committee
March 9, 1999
Statement of Mayor Sam Kathryn Campana
City of Scottsdale, Arizona
and
Vice Chair, US Conference of Mayors
Arts, Culture, and Recreation Committee

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, on behalf of the 1,100 cities represented by the US Conference of Mayors, I want to thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to present testimony supporting the increased funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR).

For far too long the federal government has not fulfilled the commitment it made over 30 years ago when it created the Land and Water Conservation Fund program to ensure that all Americans would have access to nearby park and recreation resources. We applaud the leadership of you, Mr. Chairman, in forging a bipartisan bill that would restore funding to the stateside program of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the UPARR. We also applaud the Ranking Minority Member, Congressman George Miller for his passionate leadership on this issue for many years and for the proposals he had made in his legislation.

The benefits the Land and Water Conservation Fund and UPARR can deliver to local communities and neighborhoods across this great nation are endless. Urban parks, recreation areas, and open space are critical to the vitality of our nation's cities and the citizens we serve. Urban sprawl is threatening our natural open space, the demand for parks has skyrocketed, and the backlog of necessary maintenance and repairs continue to grow. The Land and Water Conservation Fund and UPARR will help provide for the park down the street where parents play ball with their sons and daughters, where toddlers explore a playground, where the neighborhood soccer team practices, where teenagers can go just to blow off steam, and where seniors can walk along the park paths.

In my hometown of Scottsdale, Arizona, several examples of the direct community benefit resulting from the Land and Water Conservation Fund exist. As I travel through Scottsdale, I don't have to go to far without encountering these community amenities. For example, the Land and Water Conservation Fund provided funding for the park where Scottsdale's first community swimming pool is located. Since then Chestnut Park neighborhood park, Eldorado Park's Lake, Jackrabbit Park, Scottsdale Bikeways, Chapparral Tennis Court Lighting, and Vista Del Camino Spray Pads, were funded in part through Land and Water Conservation Fund. Scottsdale received 20 Land and Water Conservation Fund grants from 1965 through 1984, totaling \$2.1 million, and leveraged these funds into \$4.4 million. In Arizona alone, \$46 million of Land and Water Conservation Fund accounted for \$92 million of projects since the inception of the fund. These are only small examples of the many worthy projects throughout the country that have been supported by Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Without question, the greatest current concern of the Scottsdale community, however, is the preservation of thousands of acres of pristine Sonoran Desert and mountains that are undeveloped and lie within Scottsdale City limits. Our citizens were so committed to preserving this beautiful land that in 1995, they took the unprecedented step of approving by a wide margin a .2 percent sales tax increase to preserve over 16,000 acres of the scenic McDowell Mountains and Sonoran Desert.

Three years later, 80 percent of the proposed area has been preserved, using \$132 million in voter-approved sales tax dollars. In November, the Scottsdale community overwhelmingly approved another measure to expand the current preserve boundary by 19,000 acres. Clearly, the preservation of this unique open space—with its scenic desert, majestic mountains, stately Saguaro cactus, and energetic wildlife—is a natural resource that Scottsdale citizens want to leave as a legacy for future generations.

We urge you to revitalize the Land and Water Conservation Fund and UPARR programs, so that these federal dollars can be matched with millions in local dollars. When the nation's mayors gathered for our 66th Annual Conference of Mayors last June in Reno, Nevada we unanimously passed a resolution in support of full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the UPARR programs.

While we strongly support funding for the stateside program of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the UPARR program as called for under H.R. 701 and H.R. 798, we also encourage Congress to allow cities to apply directly for these funds rather than relying on the states to pass them through. In addition, we would ask you to allow UPARR funds to be used for land acquisition and maintenance of local parks and recreation programs.

In closing, I want to pass along a theory to which local officials subscribe. Former U.S. Conference of Mayors President and Knoxville Mayor Victor Ashe is fond of saying that our most important park is not Yellowstone, but the one down the street that serves our children every day. The importance of our parks and open spaces cannot be underestimated.

The state and local assistance program of Land and Water Conservation Fund and UPARR are two resources we should pursue and utilize so that all Americans can continue to enjoy our nation's wonderful natural resources, and the outdoors.

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, we thank you for your interest in the revitalization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the UPARR programs and offer any assistance we can provide as you draft this important legislation .

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

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